

# Overview of the Fort Basinger Gopher Recipient Site

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Recreational Public Forum  
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## Fort Basinger Gopher Tortoise Recipient Site

Fort Basinger's location in proximity to other notable nearby locations.





## Fort Basinger Gopher Tortoise Recipient Site

- Fort Basinger is 264 acres located on the Kissimmee River in Highlands County.
- Part of the KR Public Use Area.
- Open to public use including hunting, hiking, and camping.





## Fort Basinger Gopher Tortoise Recipient Site

- Fort Basinger was permitted by the Florida Fish & Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC) as a Long-term Gopher Tortoise Recipient Site in 2017.
- With this permit designation, Fort Basinger provides the District with a location to relocate gopher tortoises.



← Adult Gopher Tortoise

Juvenile Gopher Tortoise →





## Fort Basinger Gopher Tortoise Recipient Site



Gopher tortoise mechanical excavations performed within a berm near St Cloud.

- The gopher tortoises come from many types of District water resource projects.
- Gopher tortoise burrows can be as deep as 10 to 15 feet below the surface of the ground & can be 25 to 30 feet in length.
- The presence of tortoise burrows in levees can impact the structural integrity of the levees.



## Fort Basinger Gopher Tortoise Recipient Site

- This recipient site will save the District and taxpayers funds since the cost to relocate tortoises to other recipient sites can range up to \$1,400 per tortoise.
- Having a recipient site expedites the relocation process.
- Keeps gopher tortoises on public lands managed by SFWMD.





## Fort Basinger Gopher Tortoise Recipient Site

- The site is only available to internal District projects.
- All tortoise relocations are permitted by FWC.
- All tortoises are marked to identify which projects the tortoises came from.
- The permit allows the District to be able to relocate 177 tortoises onto this site.



## Fort Basinger Gopher Tortoise Recipient Site

- The District has relocated 43 tortoises to the site over the past three years.
- As the District relocates more tortoises, they will likely become a more common sight on the property.
- Remember that gopher tortoises are a threatened species in the State of Florida. Visitors are prohibited from picking up, removing, harming or harassing any gopher tortoises or damaging their burrows.
- Utilizing Fort Basinger as gopher tortoise recipient site is compatible with the current public uses allowed on the property.



## Fort Basinger Gopher Tortoise Recipient Site

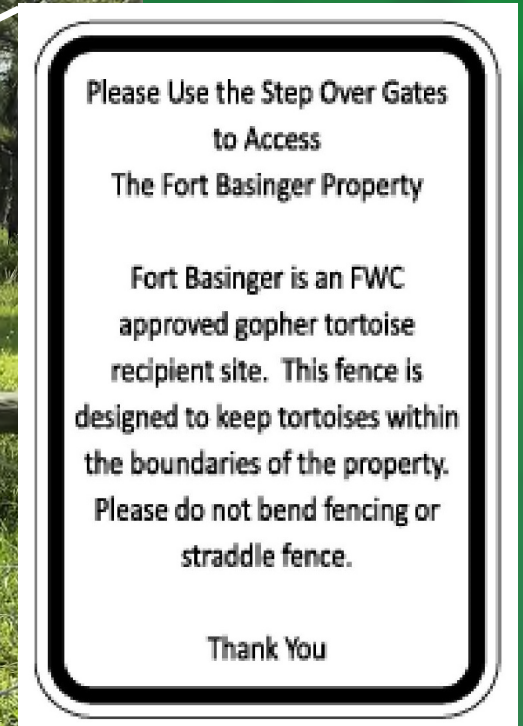
- During 2018, the District constructed a welded wire fence around the recipient site. The area inside the fence is approximately 180 acres.
- The fence is buried 18 inches into the ground to prevent tortoises from digging out of the area.
- There are three walkover gates that the District has created to allow public access onto the property.





## Fort Basinger Gopher Tortoise Recipient Site

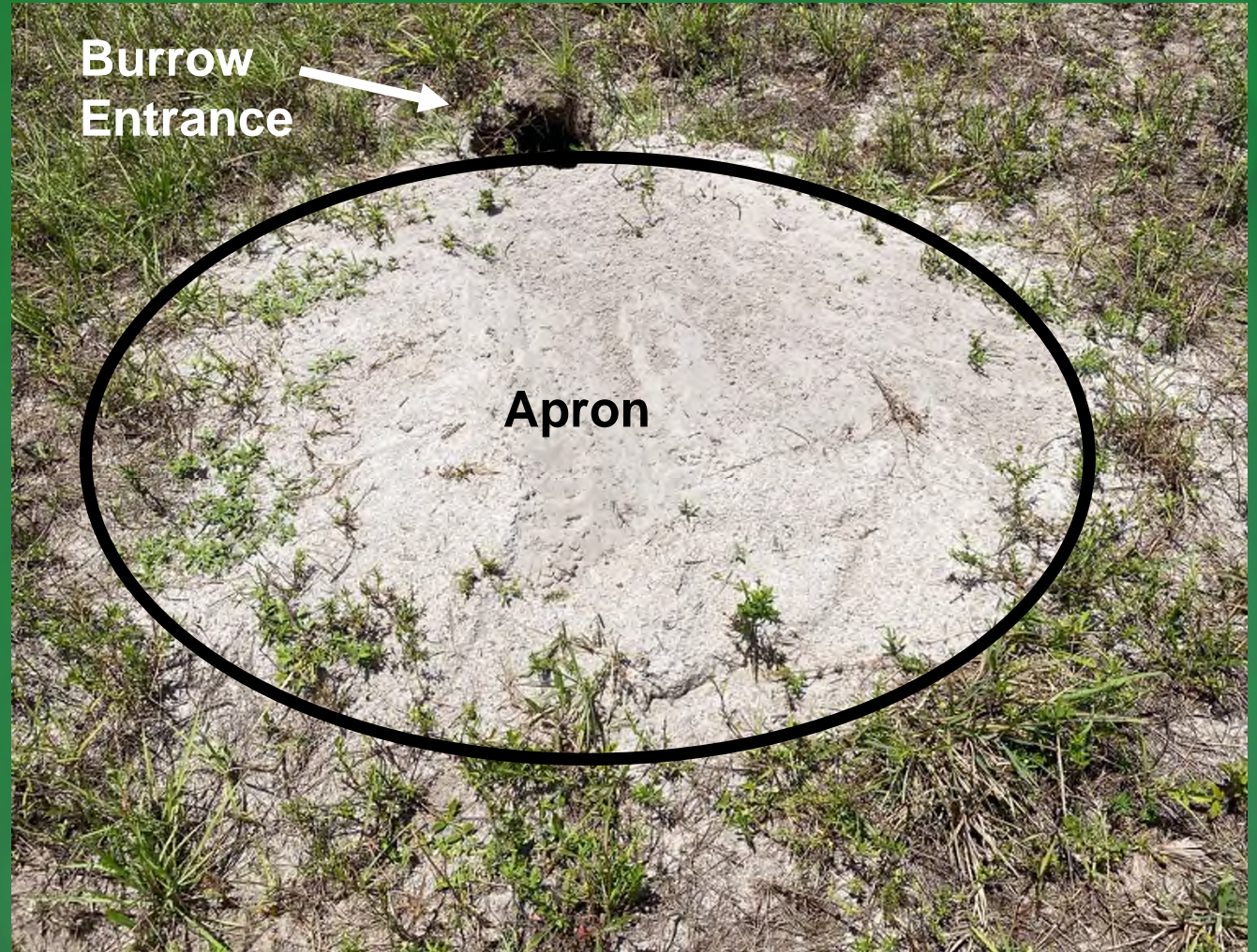
Walkovers  
gates have  
signage that  
designates  
them as  
access points.





## Fort Basinger Gopher Tortoise Recipient Site

- Public use activities around burrow entrances should be avoided.
- Never place anything in a burrow entrance including sticks and especially hands.
- Never stand or walk on the burrow apron which is where tortoises bury eggs during the breeding season.





## Fort Basinger Gopher Tortoise Recipient Site

- Fort Basinger like all the District's Kissimmee River properties is managed by the Land Stewardship Section.
- Standard land management practices including exotic plant control and prescribed burning which are consistent with gopher tortoise habitat management.





## Fort Basinger Gopher Tortoise Recipient Site

- Long-term monitoring of the gopher tortoise population and their habitat is conducted on the property. The monitoring is conducted on a defined schedule.
- Even when tortoises are no longer being relocated to the property monitoring will continue to make sure quality habitat is maintained.
- The fence is checked monthly to ensure it remains intact and retains tortoises within the gopher tortoise recipient site.



## Fort Basinger Gopher Tortoise Recipient Site



**Any  
Questions?**